



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OPERATION ICEBOX DEFENDANT PLEADS GUILTY TO FIREARMS VIOLATION

(Tyler, TX) United States Attorney Matthew D. Orwig announced that a 59-year-old Tyler man has pleaded guilty to federal gun charges in the Eastern District of Texas. **SIMON BALDERAS, SR.** admitted in court to possession of a firearm after previously being convicted of a crime of domestic violence. Balderas entered his plea today before United States Magistrate Judge Judith Guthrie.

U.S. Attorney Orwig praised the work of investigators on this case, "Operation Icebox is a prime example of the success of the combined efforts of our federal, state and local law enforcement to work together and rid our communities of illegal drugs and guns," said U.S. Attorney Orwig.

According to information presented in court, an investigation began in October 2004 into the distribution of "ice" methamphetamine in east Texas, Louisiana, and Florida. During this time, the investigation resulted in 22 undercover drug purchases, the purchase and seizure of at least 15 handguns and the seizure of at least four pounds of "ice" methamphetamine and small amounts of marijuana and pharmaceutical drugs, and the seizure of three vehicles and a safe containing in excess of \$200,000 cash. A 26-count federal indictment was returned in March charging 19 defendants with federal charges.

Balderas was previously convicted of assault – family violence in Smith County on February 6, 2002. He was sentenced to 15 months community supervision and prohibited from possessing or owning firearms or ammunition.

Balderas faces up to ten years in federal prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.00 at sentencing. A sentencing date has not been set.

This case is being investigated by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, the United States Marshals Service, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Tyler Police Department, the Smith County Sheriff's Office, and the Henderson Police Department. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Mary Ann Cozby and William Baldwin.

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